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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CAIRO 006448

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NSC STAFF FOR POUNDS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [EG](#)

SUBJECT: EGYPT'S PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN, UPDATE #1

Classified by A/DCM Michael Corbin for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (U) This message is the first in a series which will update key developments in the Egyptian presidential campaign (August 17-September 4).

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Summary  
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2. (SBU) The presidential campaign kicked off August 17. Not surprisingly, Mubarak has the most visible campaign. In addition to his August 17 speech, he delivered a second major address on August 21 and laid out an ambitious job-creation agenda. In the race for second place, Ayman Nour seems to have the upper hand over the Wafd Party's last minute entrant, No'man Gom'a. The seven other opposition parties are disappearing without a trace. After considerable speculation about backroom deals, the Muslim Brotherhood on August 21 urged its membership to vote, but not for any "corrupt" candidates. The Judge's Club threat to refuse to supervise the election continues to loom over the September 7 vote. Domestic monitoring groups continue to prepare to monitor the vote, but have voiced concerns that the Presidential Election Commission is walking back the GOE's commitment to allow domestic monitors. End summary.

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The Mubarak Juggernaut  
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3. (SBU) President Mubarak launched his reelection campaign on August 17 with a carefully scripted speech that reiterated themes of reform and progress. Clad in a blue jacket and white open-collar shirt, Mubarak presented himself as the experienced leader who is best positioned to ensure a "safe and strong Egypt." He noted that Egypt's many domestic challenges required practical, concrete solutions, but offered few specifics about his own plans for change and reform. In an August 21 rally in Cairo, Mubarak focused on his economic plans, including his promise to create 700,000 jobs per year if reelected.

4. (SBU) The fingerprints of a western campaign consultant were all over the August 17 Mubarak speech, which included a carefully chosen venue (a park in eastern Cairo), a phalanx of "representative" Egyptian citizens seated behind the president while he spoke (including peasants, youth, and at least one veiled woman), and plenty of glossy campaign posters waved by supporters (whose enthusiasm occasionally sparked chuckles and grins from Mubarak). Along with the speech, the audience was presented with a short film about Mubarak's life and achievements. This Egyptian version of "The Boy from Hope" would seem to be additional evidence of the hand of a PR firm. Mubarak's reelection website ([www.mubarak2005.com](http://www.mubarak2005.com)), which contains an extensive English language section, presents another aspect of the relatively sophisticated Mubarak campaign.

5. (C) A recent non-Egyptian visitor to the NDP campaign headquarters told us that he had encountered an individual at the headquarters who the visitor took to be a foreign campaign consultant. When our contact tried to engage him, the mystery man ducked into an adjacent office. Our contact also noted that his NDP contacts had told him that they are engaging in a considerable polling effort for the campaign, though they also noted the sensitivity of releasing any of their poll results.

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Nour's Challenge  
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6. (C) Ayman Nour launched his campaign with an August 17 speech at his Bab Shar'iya headquarters. Nour has promised that, if elected, he will serve only two years at the head of an interim government. He has promised to focus on constitutional reform, elimination of the emergency law, and an economic package that would create "real jobs." Nour received an endorsement (of dubious value) from fringe politician Talat Sadat, the nephew of slain president Anwar

Sadat, who himself had been barred for running on the Liberal Party platform due to intra-party squabbles. More significantly, Nour has courted the Muslim Brotherhood, going so far as to join Supreme Guide Mahdi Akef in prayer at a Cairo mosque. The MB has not reciprocated with anything close to an endorsement of Nour.

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No'man Gom'a: Not much so far  
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17. (C) The late entry in the race of No'man Gom'a has threatened Nour's chances of winning second place. While the Wafd Party structure is creaking into action, Gom'a has so far not impressed. His campaign managers launched his campaign without him, at an odd press conference on August 17. Gom'a appeared at a separate press event on the same day. Gom'a's campaign advertisements have focused on his desire to have a "contract" with the Egyptian people. Gom'a appeared to alienate the MB, after initial overtures, by stating that the MB should remain a social movement and not receive approval as a legal, political group.

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The rest of the opposition: We hardly knew you  
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18. (SBU) None of the other opposition parties has had any noticeable impact. On August 17, a number of them noted that they were awaiting their GOE-provided campaign funds before they could start campaigning. At least one candidate has publicly noted that he will likely endorse Mubarak for reelection.

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The Muslim Brotherhood Weighs In  
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19. (SBU) The MB announced on August 21 that MB voters should vote in the presidential poll but did not endorse a candidate. The announcement ended, for the time being, previous speculation that the MB might throw its weight behind one of the candidates, or call for a boycott. The MB's August 21 statement, released by Supreme Guide Mahdi Akef, described voting as a responsibility for which God would hold voters to account. Akef further instructed his followers not to support a "corrupt" or "tyrannical" ruler. (Note: the latter phrase in MB-speak is widely presumed to refer to Mubarak. End note.)

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The Judges' Looming Decision  
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110. (C) The Judges' Club continues to assert that it will not decide about its threat against the GOE to refuse to supervise the election, as required by the Constitution, until an extraordinary meeting on September 2. The GOE has not publicly signaled its willingness to meet the judges' demands for increased constitutional and financial independence. The GOE has continued to insist that there will be "full judicial supervision" of the polls. A boycott of the poll by a significant number of judges could, in the eyes of some observers, open the September 7 polls to a legal challenge on the grounds that the GOE did not abide by the Constitution's call for judicial supervision.

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Domestic Monitors Complain of GOE Double Talk  
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11. (C) In response to a statement by Mohammed Marei, the Chair of the Presidential Election Commission, that the PEC would not permit domestic observers to enter polling stations, the three leading Egyptian monitoring coalitions have filed a lawsuit against Marei. Their suit alleges that Marei was speaking unofficially and not on behalf of the committee, and that his words will have a chilling effect on the domestic monitoring effort. In addition, some monitors as well as a number of opposition parties have begun to complain that the GOE still has not released voter lists and campaign funds to a number of the opposition parties. Finally, the GOE has yet to issue a clear public statement about international monitors.

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JONES